

H. S. Parmenter

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FALLACIES IN EDUCATION.

Education is a subject which concerns everybody; and every one, therefore, thinks he understands it, and deems himself fully competent to give a decisive opinion upon its modes, plans, and principles. On the subject of law, medicine, surgery, tactics, masonry, or even carpentry, no man presumes to utter a decided opinion, much less to attempt to enlighten the public, without some previous knowledge and practical experience. But the lawyer, who defers modestly to the decisions of his mason, or his carpenter, even though he has never taught a school a day in his life, unhesitatingly undertakes to teach teachers how to teach. And the merchant, who goes respectfully to his lawyer to learn the principles of commercial law, because, forsooth, he is interested in education, presumes to instruct instructors in the modes of instruction. On all other subjects but that of education, in all other professions, practice and experience are supposed to be necessary to make a man master of his art or trade, and competent to decide upon the feasibility of different plans, or the value of any new suggestions. And why should not experience be equally valuable, and equally necessary, in the art of education? Indeed, it is the only safe guide, and all else is mere theory. All the tracts and treatises on the best modes of instruction, all the plans of education, put forth by men who have never taught, are *vox et præterea nihil*,—mere sound. All the men who have written on the subject of education without practical experience, are mere visionaries and theorists. They may have uttered beautiful thoughts in beautiful language, and, perchance, made some

useful suggestions; they may have devised plans which sound well to the ear, and look well on paper, and appear feasible to one who never taught; but, when tried by the experience of the schoolroom, they are found to be mere theories, impracticable and useless. Indeed, no sensible man, who has taught school for any length of time, ever imposed upon himself, or attempted to impose upon others, by theorizing on the subject of education. The training of the mind is the last of all subjects, save religion, that should be given up to experimenters, empirics, and theorists. It is sad to think how much time has been wasted, how much effort vainly expended, how much talent abused, how many noble minds perverted, dwarfed, or ruined, how many enmities engendered, how many heart-burnings and animosities enkindled, how many and what nameless evils have been generated and perpetuated by the attempt to put in practice and carry out in the schoolroom the absurdities of mere dreamers and theorists. It is time that the experienced schoolmaster spoke out his sentiments boldly. He is the only man that can enlighten and guide, correctly and safely, the public mind on this subject. Let the lawyer be the sole instructor and authoritative guide in the matters connected with his profession, the clergyman in his, the physician in his, and the schoolmaster in his. Let the community be no longer tampered with, humbugged, cheated, by men who are strangers to the atmosphere of the schoolroom. The opinion of one experienced schoolmaster is worth infinitely more than that of a hundred theorists. Let us have no more plans of education from those who never educated; let us have no more systems of discipline from those who have never disciplined themselves; let parents and young teachers no longer listen to the sophistical reasoning and fallacious theories of men who have never practised what they preach. It is easy to theorize, to build up on paper a marvellously beautiful and seemingly perfect system of discipline, which one hour's experience in the schoolroom will blow to the winds; to get up a nicely finished plan to remedy certain evils in the schoolroom, which the experienced master *knows* it will *not* remedy. He has perhaps tried it, and proved its futility. Let him, then, be heard; and let his opinion be final: no matter how great the man who got up the plan which has been tried and found wanting.

When the owner of a house suggests to his mason that the defective draft of the chimney may be remedied by a certain alteration in the flue, and is told by the mason that he has tried the plan proposed and found it ineffectual, would the owner, even if he were the governor of the State, or any other great man, still persist in maintaining the efficacy of his plan, call

the mason a ninny, and insist upon its trial? On the contrary, would not the decision of the mason be final? Indeed, would not the owner submit the whole subject to the mason, and leave it to him to use his previous knowledge and experience, ascertain the defect, and apply the appropriate remedy? And why, now, in the name of honesty and consistency, does he not treat the teacher of his children as he treats the builder of his chimneys? Why, in the name of all that is good and valuable, should parents and the community thoughtlessly run after schemers and theorists on the subject of education, and give heed to plans which may prove fatal to the mental, if not to the moral, well-being of their children? Pray tell us, is a child of less value than a chimney? It seems to be forgotten that children are not inert, senseless matter, subject to fixed and definite laws, and cannot, therefore, be worked quite in the manner of a mechanical machine; that no rules can be drawn up which will be applicable to all circumstances and all emergencies; that new occurrences and unforeseen difficulties will arise every day in every school, which your theorizer, in his velvet gown and slippers, never dreamed of, and which none but a skilful master can successfully meet and manage. The sky suddenly begins to lower; the storm is upon him in all its fury; he runs to his chart, nicely drawn up by some great visionary; but, alas, it is utterly at fault; and now, if experience be not at the helm, the shipwreck of him and his crew must be the inevitable result. It is lamentable to think what injuries the noble and sacred cause of education has suffered from absurd, fallacious, and yet plausible schemes, invented by men practically ignorant of the subject on which they wrote.

It would be a tedious, and perhaps a thankless task, to enumerate and expose all the fallacies which have been inflicted upon the public by men who have had no practical experience in education; but we propose to mention a few, which have, of late, passed current under the authority of great names.

1. *Emulation, it is said, should not be used in school, as a motive to exertion, but should be discouraged and suppressed.*

Emulation, we hold, is inherent in man, inborn, an original, constituent element of his being, given him by his Maker for good and wise ends. What careful observer of children has not seen it developed in their earliest years? Observe that youthful group of bright, happy faces, reclining upon the green and shady lawn after an hour's healthful play. Hear one of them, in emulative sport, say to his fellows: "Come, let us see who'll go to sleep first." Or, as you are travelling in your gig, at moderate speed, by some secluded farm-house, observe that little urchin sportively attempt to rival the speed of your

horse ; and see the triumph twinkle in his eye, and beam out from his whole face, when, perchance, he conquers in the race. Emulation, then, is a native principle in man's nature, designed to be what it really is, a motive power, an ever-present and powerful incentive to exertion, progress, improvement. Its activity is different in different individuals ; but it exists in all ; and is in itself a good ; for it is the gift of God. Like all other motive principles, it is, then, to be trained, governed, and used by every parent and every teacher ; to be stimulated in some, to be depressed in others, but to be used in all. Some teachers have foolishly boasted, that it did not exist in their schools. Show us a school where it does not exist, and we will show you a school composed of a dull, dead, stagnant mass of mind. In truth, no such school ever did or can exist ; and the teachers who made the empty boast imposed upon themselves. But, it will be said, emulation often degenerates and ends in wicked ambition. And what if it does ? So may every other native principle in man ; every good, indeed, that God gives us may be abused, and made the occasion and the instrument of untold evils. And shall they not be used, because, forsooth, they may be and are abused ? Such reasoning is too palpably fallacious to need refutation. But this fallacy originates in and is closely allied to another.

2. *Rewards and prizes, it is said, should not be offered or distributed in school.*

This fallacy finds advocates among men in all classes of the community ; among infidels and believers, men of all religions, and of no religion ; and it seems to originate in such amiable and kind feelings, that it is hard and almost cruel to combat and expose it. But let us look it manfully in the face. Observe the doings of the Great Teacher. In the great school which he administers, does he not sternly dispense rewards and punishments ? And shall he not be imitated by man, in that lesser school, which he administers ? Shall man be wiser than his Maker ? But it will be said, the teacher cannot decide with unerring justice and impartiality between the candidates for honors and rewards. And what if he cannot ? Shall the good, the faithful, and the diligent, go unrewarded by him, because he has no balances to weigh exactly the amount of merit in each ? Shall the disobedient and the slothful go unpunished, because he cannot define with precision the exact demerit of each ? Has he, in fact, no smiles, no approving "well done," for the deserving ; and, on the other hand, no frown, no rebuke for the negligent and ill-deserving ? Does the objector really maintain his own avowed principles, and neither reward nor punish in his school ? 'Tis impossible. It is not in human nature to look

with indifference upon the virtuous and the vicious, the slothful and the diligent. Our moral sentiments involuntarily prompt us to approve and reward the one, and to disapprove and punish the other. The school is the world in miniature; and there the young should be trained for that future school of life, where rewards and punishments will be dealt out to them with even-handed justice. If they are not so trained, they are but poorly prepared for the great drama of life, and are destined to fail of life's great end. Besides, if this objection be valid in the matter of education, it is equally valid, when carried to its legitimate results, against the administration of all law and justice in the community. And the result would be the bringing of the good down upon a level with the bad; and, ultimately, the destruction of civil society.

But let us, now, turn to a fallacy of a different kind.

3. *It is said, that nothing should be committed to memory, which is not understood; that nothing is learned, which is not fully explained.*

Let it not be supposed, that we would wish children to be compelled to commit to memory, what, to them, is entirely unintelligible; or that their lessons should never be explained and illustrated. We contend for no such absurdity. But we do contend, in opposition to the prevailing notions of the day, that children should and must be made to commit to memory, and say by rote, many things which they do not and cannot understand; and that the aids, helps, explanations, and illustrations, given so profusely and indiscriminately in the school-books of the present day, and used in many of our schools, are unnecessary and pernicious. Take, for instance, arithmetic. The child is required to commit to memory the multiplication-table so perfectly that he can repeat it, backwards or forwards, without hesitation or mistake. And what child understands the rationale of it? Not one. And the same is true of many other things which children every day are justly required to lodge in their memories. Take, again, spelling. How absurd and foolish it is, to refuse to teach a child the orthography of the words of his language till he understands their meaning; or to require him, while he is learning the spelling of a word, to commit to memory, at the same time, its synonyme, and thus to vex, harass, and torment him, by dividing his attention, at the same instant, between two things totally disconnected and dissimilar; and that, too, under the false and unreasonable notion, that, by so doing, he understands what he is committing; whereas, in point of fact, he is, during the whole process, using his memory, and his memory alone; using it, too, under great and unnecessary disadvantages,

by having his attention distracted between two such dissimilar things as spelling and defining. What impositions upon themselves and the public do school-committees sometimes allow themselves to practise, by giving to the classes in the schools a series of words to define, and making the result a test of their knowledge; whereas it is, mainly, a mere test of verbal memory. What valuable or important knowledge has that child gained, what discipline of the powers of his mind except that of mere memory does he exhibit, who can promptly tell you that "sui generis" means "unique," or that "heavy" means "ponderous?" Could we forget the waste of time, the perversion of talent, and the permanent injuries to the mind, we should give ourselves up to unrestrained laughter, whenever we see such absurd antics played off upon the people. All this arises from ignorance, or the want of reflection, or the desire of gaining notoriety and influence; and hence, too, probably, originated all the ridicule which has been attempted to be thrown upon what are called "nonsense columns." Commend us to those same nonsense columns; which have made more and better spellers than all the new-fangled contrivances and quack impositions of the present day. But to return to the other part of the fallacy, the nature and amount of explanation necessary. The tendency of the present day is, to explain what scarcely needs explanation; to illustrate what before was plain; to remove every obstruction in the path of the learner; to fill up every valley, and level every hill; to make the crooked straight, and rough places plain. Schoolbooks are filled with notes and comments, explanations heaped upon explanations, till there is nothing left for the learner to inquire after, nothing to arouse attention, nothing to exercise and strengthen the powers of reason, judgment, or comparison; nothing, in short, for the mind to grapple with. Easy lessons in this and in that, "Grammar made easy," "Arithmetic made easy," and a thousand other "made eases," fill our bookstores and our schools, till our scholars, blessed souls, have now nothing to do but open their mouths to receive and swallow the ready-made dose, as infants do the pap prepared by their mothers. We protest, earnestly and loudly, against all aids prepared by those who have had no experience in teaching. None but a wise and experienced teacher can tell how much assistance, or where, or when, it is needed; and even he is liable to give too much rather than too little, too often rather than too seldom. At the present time, when immediate rather than future, present rather than lasting results are demanded, and made the test of the proficiency of the pupil and the ability of the master; when, as in some of our cities, the community have annually spread before them the exact acquirements of each

pupil reckoned in figures, even to the nicety of a fraction, with the amount carried out and posted up like a ledger for the inspection of the curious; urged on as he is by such false measures, by the importunities of ignorant or unreflecting parents, and by the very natural desire of securing a good reputation; no wonder, if, under such impulses, he should violate the dictates of his better judgment, succumb to the pressing tide, and give unnecessary and hurtful help and assistance to his pupils. Without it, they will travel slower, but will be gradually acquiring strength and vigor to bear the fatigues and surmount the difficulties of the journey alone and unaided; but with it, they will travel faster and reach certain stages of their journey sooner; and, as present results are in demand, the present alone is cared for, and the future left to take care of itself. The temptation is too strong to be resisted, and the consequence is a splendid but specious show of unsound, unsubstantial, superficial, undigested knowledge; a pompous parade, an imposing cheat; just as, not many years ago, the great truths of Euclid were recited with parrot-like fluency by "toddling wee things" in our infant schools.

This leads us to notice another fallacy connected with the last; indeed, all the fallacies on the subject of education are more or less intimately related, and might, perhaps, be traced up to one and the same source.

4. *Education is instruction; or, to teach is to impart knowledge.*

This very common fallacy originates from ignorance of the true objects of education. We hold then, and maintain, that it is the business of the educator to teach, not knowledge, but the means of knowledge, to train the mental as we train the physical powers, to make the school a *gymnasium* of the mind. We do not say, or intend to say, that, while thus training the mental powers, useful knowledge may not be imparted; or, that no regard should be had to the subjects taught in school, and to their relative order and importance. This would be manifestly unwise and absurd. But what we do mean to say, and contend for, is this: that the subjects of study, whatever they may be, should be made the occasions and the means of so training and disciplining the whole mind, that the learner shall learn how to learn, and shall acquire the virtues of industry, patience, and perseverance, niceness of discrimination, quickness of apprehension, soundness of judgment, readiness and retentiveness of memory, and a perfect control over his attention. It is, then, of comparatively less importance what he studies, than how he studies. The question of his progress concerns not so much the kind or the number of books he has studied, as his ability to study and master some given subject.

His teacher looks not so much to the present, as to the future; for he is laying, slowly but surely, a firm foundation, upon which the pupil himself may erect a superstructure of just such dimensions and beauty as he chooses. Hence his teacher will eschew much of the infantile educational pap of the present day, and put into his hands books which contain some difficulties to be surmounted, some hard questions to be solved; and hence, too, he will be sparing of his assistance, and give it only when he is sure it is needed; else, how can the virtues of industry, or patience, or perseverance, be acquired? Such a training as this, and no other, deserves the name of education, presupposes discipline, rigid discipline; for where there is the right kind of teaching, there must, of necessity, be discipline. Teaching and discipline are, indeed, correlative terms, and involve each other. Hence, the true teacher is a good disciplinarian, and is given to no extremes; neither to the merciless and constant use of the rod, nor to an entire reliance on moral suasion. His aims are high and noble, but the results are future and distant. Hence, he courts not the popularity of the present moment, flatters the caprices of no man, rebukes the current errors of the day, and looks to the future for his reward. And it requires no small amount of moral courage in a teacher, of the present day, to be honest and truthful in his profession. Policy will often tempt him to yield to the dictates or suggestions of men who have no practical knowledge, who have theories which they wish to be tried, or who have been clothed with such authority that the teacher is at their mercy. But, at whatever sacrifice it may be done, let the experienced teacher give utterance to his experience, be ready to give a reason for the faith that is in him, with modesty and firmness, and the public will ultimately listen and give heed to his sayings; for reason and truth, if freely uttered, will ultimately triumph over folly and error.

Good and evil exist together in the soul. If the latter gain the preponderance, from defective education or the absence of good example, man sinks beneath himself, degenerates; education, on the other hand, elevates him above himself.

There is this difference between happiness and wisdom: He that thinks himself the happiest man, may really be so; but he that thinks himself the wisest, is generally the greatest fool.

We should never estimate the soundness of principles by our own ability to defend them, or consider an objection as unanswerable, to which we can find no reply.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

Mr. Editor,—As your paper is devoted to the interests of education generally, I have thought that it should be the medium of some hints that might be useful to teachers in our Primary Schools. My own experience, as an instructor of one of these schools, is somewhat limited, and my principal object in writing this communication is, to induce those of larger experience to imitate my example.

Our Primary Schools are, in reality, of *primary* importance, though they have not received *primary* attention. They take the child at the early age of four years, when it is just beginning to escape from its mother's most vigilant care, and, as a general thing, retain it until it arrives at the age of eight years, and often one or two years longer. This embraces a most important period of life, during which some of the most durable impressions are made upon the mind;—impressions which will affect, for good or ill, its whole future being.

How important is it, then, that a teacher should strive to obtain the *best methods* of gaining kindly influences over the tender minds of children. A step of the first importance is, I think, to gain their *affections*. This is the *basis* on which all other influences may act. Gain a child's love, and you gain its confidence; and love and confidence combined will give one a strong influence over *any* mind, and particularly so over the pliable mind of a child. It is in the primary school that the foundation for all future knowledge is laid; and how important that this be well and thoroughly laid! How often is it the case that errors in the foundation affect injuriously the whole superstructure! It is, for instance, often the case that the habit of *indistinct utterance* is so confirmed in these schools, that the labor of years can hardly remedy the evil. It is much easier to *do* well than to *undo* what has already been done wrong.

A child should have a *fear* as well as a *love* for its teacher:—not that degree of fear which will paralyze half its efforts to struggle up the first rugged hill of knowledge, but enough to lead it to ready and implicit obedience. The Christian *loves* and *fears* his heavenly Father; so a child should love and fear his earthly parents and teachers. I would have children controlled by all the kindly influences that can be brought to bear upon them; but I would not refrain from sterner measures, if oft-bestowed kindness failed to have a proper effect. Exact and ready obedience should be insisted on in the Primary School; and the *habit*, once thoroughly established here, will be of service in all subsequent life.

I consider it desirable that teachers should become acquainted with the parents of their pupils, and whenever they meet them give a full and honest account of the school-doings of the children. It is quite important that a teacher know the peculiarities in the habits and temperaments of all her pupils. On these points she can be greatly aided by the parents. I have found it a very good plan, sometimes, when a pupil has violated the regulations of the school, to send a note to the parents, informing them of the particulars. It has often secured a kind and degree of coöperation of great service. When a child feels that both his parents and teachers are united in their efforts on his account, he will very seldom venture to violate or disregard the wholesome restraints of the schoolroom.

A child should feel that his teacher is *just* and *reasonable*. If punishment is inflicted, as it sometimes must be, let the pupil be made to feel that it is not because his teacher is angry with him or dislikes him, but that it is the consequence of his own *wrong actions*. Cause him to feel that misconduct deserves and will receive punishment. Place before him, in contrast, the unhappy and painful results of wrong-doing, and the pleasure given and received by doing right, and you will rarely find one, even among those who have not received a salutary *home* discipline (and many such may be found in Primary Schools), who will feel that you are unjust.

Teachers should aim to convince their pupils that they are their *friends*. They should manifest an interest in all their concerns and rational amusements, and sympathize with them in all their troubles, and childhood's troubles are neither few nor small. They should encourage and cheer their pupils; this will do them much good, and aid them in the accomplishment of their daily lessons. Make them feel that they do *well*, and they will strive to do *still better*. It will increase their confidence.

Teachers must expect to have their trials; they are attendant upon every situation in life. Those of the teacher are, in a measure, peculiar, and call for the perfect exercise of *self-government*, *patience*, and *perseverance*. She has to do with a great variety of habits and dispositions. But the faithful and devoted teacher, who discharges conscientiously her duties, will in the end gain the rewards of a faithful servant.

A PRIMARY TEACHER.

It were good that men in their innovations would follow the example of time itself, which indeed innovateth greatly, but quietly, and by degrees scarce to be perceived.—*Bacon*.

THE LATE DAVID P. PAGE.

Well may the poet exclaim, "So speeds away life, and its shadows!" "Man that is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay." The rich and the poor, the good and the bad, the old and the young, all classes, all conditions of men, "await alike the inevitable hour." "The wind passeth over them, and they are gone."

So entirely common is this lot to all, that the ceaseless ravages of death, on every side, are scarcely noticed; and if our own immediate circle of friends be not broken, our sympathy is for a moment excited, our thoughts perhaps aroused, and then we rush forward to our accustomed duties, and straightway forget what manner of spirit we are of. And this is well. Were it not so, the constant demand upon our sympathies, and the consequent waste of our sensibilities, would unfit us for life's duties, and prepare for us a certain and speedy death.

There is, however, a lesson which each of these sad events is calculated to teach us: it is, to work while it is day, for the night cometh; that this is not our home; that we must all go hence; that life is indeed "but a winter's day, a journey to the tomb."

But now the time of our own bereavement has come. Death has not only entered the wide circle of friends whom he we mourn drew around him, but has laid his hand upon one eminent in his profession, and smitten down in a moment one of its brightest ornaments and supports. Let us, his fellow-laborers and companions, devote a brief space to the memory of his virtues and character, and then go forth to the work assigned us, wiser and better for the lesson they are adapted to teach us.

David P. Page was born in Epping, N. H., July 1, 1808. His father was a respectable farmer, and his early life was mostly spent in like employments. As was formerly almost universally the case with those who were thus situated, his early education was greatly deficient; an ardent thirst for knowledge, however, began to develop itself long before means for gratifying it could be found. Such opportunities for improvement as chance threw in his way were eagerly seized upon; but it was not until he had almost reached the age of a man, that he was enabled to satisfy his mental thirst, in part, by a few terms of study at Hampton Academy.

It was here that he principally fitted himself to commence his chosen profession. His first essay at teaching was in Newbury,

Mass., where he took charge of a small school, of a rank which corresponded with his attainments at that time. Here he soon began to develop those characteristics which were eminently his; perseverance in overcoming difficulties, self-reliance under all circumstances, and a strong desire to excel as a teacher.

By dint of close and continued application to study, Mr. Page soon became prepared to take charge of a school demanding in its teacher much higher qualifications; and, at length, after some time spent as an assistant to R. S. Howard, Esq., the accomplished Principal of the High School for boys in Newburyport, he was appointed Principal of its English department; a situation which he filled with the highest honor to himself, and with distinguished success.

In the year 1844, he was appointed Principal of the STATE NORMAL SCHOOL, at Albany; an important trust, which he executed with marked zeal and efficiency to the time of his death, which occurred suddenly on the morning of January 1, 1848, after an illness of only ten days.

In analyzing the character of Mr. Page, one could hardly fail to observe the prominent features above mentioned. The standard which he set up for himself, was never lost sight of for a moment until it was reached. Obstacles many and great to a less determined mind, frequently beset his path, but they were always in the end surmounted. Clouds sometimes hung over his head and darkened his way; but, with full faith in their soon passing over and leaving a bright sun to guide him, he pressed on; he might be sometimes disappointed, but was never discouraged.

His self-possession never left him; cool and collected at all times, he could look calmly on when most would have been unduly agitated or confused.

Unbounded self-reliance belonged to his character in a remarkable degree. It did not make him arrogant and presuming, but gave him constant assurance of success. Not that he felt himself to be equal to every emergency which might arise, but he seemed to possess a full confidence in his ability, with sufficient prudence and labor, to prepare himself to meet it.

Mr. Page was a keen and accurate observer of human nature. None could more quickly perceive the peculiarities of those with whom he had to deal, and none were more successful than he in operating upon those hidden springs which influence men's actions.

He was a Christian.

In his intercourse with the world he was a gentleman, both in his bearing and his speech; not willing, to be sure, to be

trodden upon, but ever ready to forgive an injury and to forget a wrong unintended. With his pupils, he was affable, affectionate, and dignified. Amongst his friends and associates, he was kind-hearted, social, and ever ready to please or assist. In the domestic circle, he was greatly beloved and respected; — but it is not necessary to enter the sanctuary of private grief. A remembrance of his many virtues, of his ardent love, and of his Christian character, is all of him now left to them. God has been pleased to take him away in the midst of his days and his usefulness. Why he has done it, we cannot tell; but of this we are assured, — that the Judge of all the earth doeth rightly. He has, we trust, exchanged a world of labor and sorrow for a more exalted state of being; for an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. “And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, from henceforth, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labors.”

E. S. S.

EXTRACT FROM HERODOTUS.

“Amasis, king of Egypt, adopted the following arrangement of affairs. From early dawn till near mid-day, he promptly attended to the business that was brought before him; but after that, he drank and joked with his companions, and gave himself up to levity and mirth. His friends were grieved at this, and respectfully addressed him thus: —

‘O King, you do not govern yourself rightly, but make yourself too cheap; for it behooves the king, sitting sedately on his venerable throne, to spend the day in transacting the affairs of state. Your subjects would thus perceive, that they are governed by a great man; and you would enjoy a higher reputation. But now your conduct is by no means worthy of the royal dignity.’

To which the king thus replied: —

‘Archers, when they wish to use their bows, bend and string them; and unstring them when they have used them. For, if their bows remained strung all the time, they would break, and, in the time of need, be useless. Just such is the condition of man. If he were always serious, and should not devote a part of his time to hilarity and sport, he would insensibly become either frantic or stupid.’”

Inference — Schoolmasters ought to have long vacations.

SPELLING.

Mr. Editor ;—Presuming that it will be one important feature of your paper to suggest modes for conducting or teaching different branches in our common schools, I herewith send you a few hints on the subject of spelling.

Of all the branches attended to in our schools, there are but few of more importance than spelling; and yet it receives less attention, and is less thoroughly taught than most other branches. In itself it is a dry and uninteresting exercise, though a variety in the “modus operandi” may tend to make it somewhat attractive. It will be my object, in the present communication, to allude to some of the methods which I have adopted with scholars who are sufficiently advanced, which is usually the case with those who are eight years of age and upwards. With most below this age, the usual oral method must be mainly relied on, with such variations in its practice as the tact of the teacher may introduce.

In addition to the oral method, for more advanced pupils, I think it desirable to require frequent exercises in writing. It is probably true that most experienced teachers resort to this mode, but, for the benefit of others, I will specify one or two of the variations which I have found useful in conducting written exercises of this kind.

My usual practice is, to select words from the reading-lessons, and pupils are directed to study such lessons with a view to a spelling exercise. After the class has read, I direct each scholar to write upon his slate some twenty or more words, as I dictate. I speak the words distinctly, and but once, allowing sufficient time for all to write legibly. After the words are written, each slate may be examined separately and all errors noted, or the members of the class may exchange slates, and each examine his companion's slate while the teacher spells the words properly. Neither of these methods will consume much time, and either of them is preferable to the oral method.

But I have sometimes found scholars quite expert in spelling difficult or long words, who nevertheless make many and great mistakes in words that are shorter, and, apparently, much easier. To remedy this, I have often found it useful to read, slowly, a whole paragraph or stanza, and require the members of a class to write the same upon their slates. This course I think worthy of frequent adoption.

Again, I have found scholars exceedingly deficient in spelling the names of states, countries, towns, and individuals. Any teacher, who has not tried the experiment, would be astonished at the number and nature of the errors that would be made by a

class on the first trial in writing proper names. Let teachers who have not been accustomed to the use of such words in conducting a spelling exercise, commence by requesting their pupils to write all the *Christian* names of their schoolmates, the names of the counties in the State, towns in the county, or States in the Union. The result, at first, may not be very satisfactory, but if the plan is frequently adopted, it will effect much improvement.

In order to induce scholars to give attention to the orthography of words, I have sometimes requested them to select, from certain designated pages, some of the most difficult words, which I subsequently "give out" to the whole class. The principal advantage in this plan, results from the fact that each scholar, in searching for a few words, will notice the orthography of a large number; he will select such only as appear to him difficult.

In dictating words to a class, I think the teacher should pronounce them just as he would in reading, or in common conversation; and, if the scholars spell orally, no one should be allowed to try more than once.

I have merely named these as among the modes which I have adopted with some degree of success. They may serve as suggestive hints to others, and lead to other and better practices. If possible, the teacher should awaken an interest on the part of his pupils; and a degree of variety in the mode of conducting the exercise will not only assist in awakening an interest, but will secure improvement. A.

EXTRACT.

THE POWER OF STEAM. — A *pint* of water, evaporated by two ounces of coal, swells into two hundred and sixteen gallons of steam, with a mechanical force sufficient to raise a weight of thirty-seven tons a foot high. By allowing it to expand, by virtue of its elasticity, a further mechanical force may be attained, at least equal in amount to the former.

Five pints of water, evaporated by a pound of coke in a locomotive engine, will exert a mechanical power sufficient to draw two tons' weight on a railroad a distance of one mile in two minutes. Four horses in a stagecoach, on a common road, will draw the same weight the same distance in about eight minutes.

Four tons of coke, worth twenty-five dollars, will evaporate water enough to carry on a railway a train of coaches weighing about eighty tons, and transporting two hundred and forty

passengers, with their luggage, from Liverpool to Birmingham and back again, total distance 190 miles, in four hours and a quarter each way. To transport the same number of passengers daily by stagecoaches, on a common road, between the same places, would require twenty coaches, and an establishment of three thousand eight hundred horses, with which the journey in each direction would be performed in about twelve hours. — *Dr. Lardner's Lectures.*

OHIO SCHOOL JOURNAL.

We have received the several numbers of this paper, for which the editor will accept our thanks. This is a neatly-printed and well-conducted monthly, published at Columbus, Ohio, and edited by A. D. LORD, M.D., who has long been a faithful and successful laborer in the cause of education.

Each number contains 12 pages, and it is furnished at the low price of 50 cents per annum. We wish it success, and commend it to the patronage of the friends of education.

A REQUEST.

Will those who feel interested in the success of the Massachusetts Teacher, make a little effort to extend its circulation in their respective vicinities? Our prospects are very encouraging. From some places we have received a large number of names, and in one *city* every member of the School Committee has become a subscriber. It is for the *teachers*, however, to say whether the paper shall be well sustained or not. A little effort from each will make its success all that can be desired. Who will make an *immediate* trial to obtain a few additional subscribers? If all will, we shall need no regular agents.

The first Number of the Teacher was sent to many with the request that it should be returned if they did not wish to be considered subscribers. Only six or eight of these have returned the Number sent, and we presume that all others wish it regularly sent to them.

Subscriptions received, in Boston, at the bookstore of J. M. Whittemore, 114 Washington Street; in Salem, at the bookstore of W. & S. B. Ives, Essex Street. Communications left at the same places will be duly received.

Exchanges, communications, &c., may be directed to the "MASSACHUSETTS TEACHER," Boston, or Salem. Postage on all communications must be prepaid.